

Edward Cary House
117 Main Street
Nantucket
Nantucket County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MASS-855

HABS
MASS
10-NANT
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

EDWARD CARY HOUSE

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Location: 117 Main Street (on north side),
Nantucket, Massachusetts

Present Owner: Norman L. and Edith E. Olsen

Present Occupant: Olsen family

Present Use: Residence

Brief Statement
of Significance: Example of the larger type of Nantucket home
at the end of the eighteenth century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Land was part of the Gardner Crooked Record conveyed in 1770 to Edward Cary. House was built by him about 1800. Owners were:
1800 -- Edward Cary & Estate of.
1818 -- Reuben Baxter & Estate of.
1864 -- William Baxter & Estate of.
1919 -- Melville B. Melendy.
1920 -- Eleanor D. Melendy.
1925 -- Marguerite G. Freeman.
1948 -- to date -- Norman L. & Edith E. Olsen.
(Abstract, Records in Registry of Deeds, Nantucket, Mass.)
2. Date of erection: According to the period when such houses were common in New Bedford and vicinity, it would be expected that this house was built about 1800 or possibly a few years earlier. (Abstract, Nantucket Lands and Land Owners by Worth)
3. Architect: Unknown.
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: This hip roof house is an illustration of the more prosperous type of architecture that was built as business revived after the Revolutionary War. The house has five bays and the door, which is placed in the central and largest bay, has a much more pretentious aspect to it than those popular at an earlier date. The rooms are wide and well proportioned. There are large fireplaces. The height of the ceilings was increased and a central

hallway runs through the building.

5. Alterations and additions: No record of any significant changes.

- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: Edward Cary, who built the house, was the first Cary to live on Nantucket, coming to the Island from Charlestown, Massachusetts, at the time of the Revolution as he was English (a Tory) but wanted to live in America. He did not want to fight against either England or the Colonies so migrated to Nantucket which was supposed to be neutral.

His son, Robert, was the progenitor of one of Nantucket's most illustrious sailor families. The Carys were among the first of the Nantucket captains to sail directly to China. They were sealers who traded the valued fur-seal skins at Canton for nankeen (yellow cotton cloth), tea, spices and other commodities. Capt. James Cary was at Canton in the ship Rose as early as 1803.

The Carys sold this house to Reuben Baxter, whose son, Captain William Baxter, lived in it and in later years, when retired from the sea, ran the stage-coach to Siasconset. (Abstract, clippings in Scrapbook owned by Miss Grace Brown Gardner.)

- C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: Two illustrations, one of doorway and one of house, in Early Dwellings Of Nantucket, The White Pine Series of Architectural Monographs, Vol. III, No. 6; photograph of exterior in Ninety-Five Percent Perfect by Everett U. Crosby, Nantucket: Tetaukimmo Press, 1953; old photograph in Nantucket Lands and Land Owners by Henry Barnard Worth, Nantucket: Nantucket Historical Association Bulletin, Vol 2, No. 1&7, 1904.
2. Bibliography:
Fowlkes, George Allen. A Mirror of Nantucket, an Architectural History of the Island, 1686-1850. New Jersey, 1959.
Gardner, Grace Brown. Scrapbooks owned by Miss Gardner (microfilm in Nantucket Antheneum).
Worth, Henry Barnard. Nantucket Lands and Land Owners. Nantucket: Nantucket Historical Association Bulletin, Vol. 2, No. 1&7, 1904.

Prepared by Mrs. Marie M. Coffin
Nantucket, Massachusetts
January, 1965

PART II. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared for the Historic American Buildings Survey project on Nantucket, Massachusetts. They are part of a continuing HABS comprehensive survey of the early architecture and urban design of Nantucket financed by a grant from the Nantucket Historical Trust.

The project was under the general supervision of James C. Massey, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Historical information was provided by Mrs. Marie M. Coffin of Nantucket, Massachusetts. Photographs are by Cervin Robinson of Nantucket, Massachusetts. The material was edited for deposit in the Library of Congress by Mrs. Constance Werner Ramirez, August 1971.